

Abstract of the Disclosure

Methods and apparatus provide a reply to a telephone caller in response to an abbreviated input string. A message is received from a telephone caller during a telephone call, and supplemental information is derived which relates to at least one of the telephone caller and the telephone call. Using the message from the caller in combination with the supplemental information, an appropriate reply to the message is identified, which is then provided to the caller. The invention is applicable to various telecommunications infrastructures, including cellular telephony. The message may be provided by the caller in response to a request forming part of a radio or television broadcast, in which case the message might relate to channel number or broadcast frequency, with the system storing a channel map to identify the station responsible for the broadcast, if so required. The supplemental information relating to the caller would typically include at least a portion of the telephone number of the caller, or may additionally relate to the date or the time of the telephone call. Depending upon the circumstances, the date/time of the call may form part of the message. The reply to the caller may occur during the telephone call, wherein the system might place an additional telephone call to identify the appropriate reply. Such a call may be toll-free, in which case the user may be patched-in to receive the

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information. Alternatively the reply may be in the form of  
a facsimile or electronic mail later directed to the caller.

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